UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.3/1991/31
4 February 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-sixth session
4-13 February 1991
Item 13 (b) of the provisional agenda*

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND PLANNING

Proposed programme of work of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1992-1993 and the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1	2
I. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE STATISTICAL OFFICE FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993	2 - 7	2
II. PROGRAMME ON STATISTICS OF THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997	8 - 11	3
III. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION	12	4

* E/CN.3/1991/1 and Corr.1.

INTRODUCTION

1. At its present session, the Statistical Commission has before it a note by the Secretary-General on the proposed programme of work of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1992-1993 and related information (E/CN.3/1991/CRP.1) and the programme on statistics of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (A/45/6 (Prog. 24)), which was adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session (resolution 45/253) with the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its thirtieth session.

I. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE STATISTICAL OFFICE FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

2. In accordance with the relevant regulations and rules governing programme planning 1/ the draft programme in statistics is submitted for review and comments by the Statistical Commission. The note by the Secretary-General mentioned above contains (a) the proposed programme of work of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1992-1993; (b) proposals on priorities in the work programme; and (c) indicative figures on Professional work-months assigned to each subprogramme and other components.

3. The proposed programme of work is tentative, since it has not yet been reviewed by the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board and is subject to change in the light of the Board's central review and the Secretary-General's decisions on the proposed programme budget as a whole. The Secretary-General's proposed programme budget will be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session for consideration and approval. The proposed programme of work is based on the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997.

4. The Commission should be aware that in accordance with regulations 3.1 and rules 103.2, 103.3 and 103.6 of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, although the suggestions or recommendations on the substance of the work programme made by the intergovernmental body concerned may be taken into account in the course of the preparation and review of the programme budget, the Secretary-General cannot commit himself to the adoption of such suggestions or recommendations before the proposed programme budget is completed. Furthermore, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 43/214 and 45/255 the programme budget outline for the biennium 1992-1993 has already been established and the Assembly has already taken a decision on the total preliminary estimates for that biennium. The draft programme of work for the biennium 1992-1993 submitted to the Commission has been prepared in this context.

5. The format of the proposed programme of work is in line with the new framework set out in the medium-term plan. Another new feature of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 is the elimination of programme element levels within subprogrammes. Accordingly, outputs are grouped in programmes and subprogrammes.

6. The Commission will recall that at a number of its previous sessions it had noted the difficulty involved in priority-setting at the programme element level. 2/ Moreover, the Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination, at its thirteenth session, requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to "present its proposals on priorities at the output level, if feasible, and describe the basis or rationale for the proposed priorities" (E/CN.3/1991/2, para. 65). The Commission may therefore be pleased to note that under the new procedure established for priority-setting, priorities for the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 will be set at the output/services level rather than at the programme element level. High and low priority outputs must approximate 10-20 per cent of the resources requested for each programme. In addition to ensuring that there is no disproportion in resources devoted to high and low priority outputs, the instructions also provide that no designation of low priority should be given to any output within those subprogrammes designated as high priority in the medium-term plan. In the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, subprogrammes 1, 4 and 5 of the statistics programme are designated high priority. Accordingly, all low priority outputs in the statistics programme must be selected from subprogrammes 2 and 3.

7. Comparative information on resources for the biennium 1990-1991 and 1992-1993 is provided in tables 1 and 2 of document E/CN.3/1991/CRP.1. The tables contain indicative figures on Professional work-months, resources requested for consultancies, travel and ad hoc expert group meetings for the biennium 1992-1993 and comparable figures of approved resources for the previous biennium, with explanatory footnotes.

II. PROGRAMME ON STATISTICS OF THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997

8. The Commission will recall that it considered a draft of the statistics programme of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 at its twenty-fifth session (E/CN.3/1989/CRP.2). The draft was revised taking into account, inter alia, the comments of the Commission 3/ and was submitted in 1990, together with the introduction and the other programmes of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, to the General Assembly through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, at its thirtieth session.

9. The Commission has before it the programme on statistics of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (A/45/6 (Prog.24)), adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session with the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination.

10. The conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination are as follows (see A/45/16 (Part I)):

> "234. The Committee stressed the importance of the timeliness and easy availability of statistical publications and the need to maintain the central and intersectoral role of the Statistical Office.

"235. The Committee also stressed the need for the statistical data contained in those publications to be reliable and comparable.

"236. It was agreed that the mandate contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/4 should be included as a mandate in subprogramme 1. It also acknowledged the collaboration between the Statistical Office and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

"237. The Committee recommended approval of programme 24 of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, taking into account the above conclusions."

11. In accordance with the relevant regulations and rules governing programme planning, 1/ revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 will be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, in 1992, to cover the biennium 1994-1995.

III. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

12. Bearing in mind the information provided in sections I and II above, the Commission may wish to review the proposed programme of work and priorities of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1992-1993 and provide comments to the Secretary-General, taking into account the conclusions of the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination on the statistics programme of the medium-term plan.

Notes

1/ See ST/SGB/PPBME/Rules/1 (1987); see also the revisions adopted by the General Assembly (resolution 42/215) on the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination contained in Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/42/16), part two, para. 74, and the text on the contingency fund adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 42/211.

2/ See, for example, Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1987, Supplement No. 6 (E/1987/19), paras. 205 and 206.

3/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1987, Supplement No. 3 (E/1989/21), paras. 220-225.